



"Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

EDITOR
LOIS MICHEL
9744-8528

PRESIDENT
ALAN WRIGHT
9743-4869

PUBLIC RELATIONS
TRISH SKEHAN
4369-4172

SECRETARY/TREASURER
LOIS MICHEL
3 Flavelle Street
(P.O. Box 152)
Concord 2137
Phone: 9744-8528
Fax: 9744-7591

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
VINCE SCERRI
9736-1003

MEETINGS General Meetings

2nd Wednesday of month
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre
9 Wellbank Street, Concord
Phone: 8765-9155

Executive Meetings

4th Wednesday of
August, October, January,
March, May and July
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre

Walker Estates Committee

4th Wednesday of
September, November,
February, April and June
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

Archives/Local History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

Heritage

Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Oral/Family History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

CONCORD HERITAGE MUSEUM

5 Wellbank Street
Open 2:00 - 4:00 pm
on 1st and 3rd
Wednesdays & Saturdays

No.128

January 2007

The Rotunda in Cabarita Park

A Botanic Gardens & Domains Report for 1902 states:

Swearing-in Pavilion: The temporary pavilion used for the swearing-in of the first Governor-General in 1901 was removed during the year, having been presented to the Municipality of Concord for erection in the Mortlake Park.

The Sydney Morning Herald of 2nd January, 1901, described the pavilion in glowing terms.

Entering the Centennial Park the swearing-in pavilion soon opens to the view. At the foot of the semi-circle of low hills which have their heights on the Waverley boundary of the Centennial Park, the pure whiteness and chaste beauty of the pavilion in which the Governor-General swore to maintain our Constitution struck the vision with the force of its clear, sharp contrast to the dull green, grass-grown ground, and the darker hues of the native ornamental trees.

It had no florist's art to lend a transitory effectiveness, yet perhaps it will be universally conceded that in its simple purity and graceful elegance of outline, its exquisite modellings designed to symbolise the arts and crafts of the Commonwealth, its circumspect ornateness, and the vivid touch of colour lent to it by the magnificent royal standard proudly moving over it 70 ft in the air, it stood incomparably above all other inanimate displays of the day.

Built of the material known to the artisans as fibrous plaster, it looked like a white

marble structure.

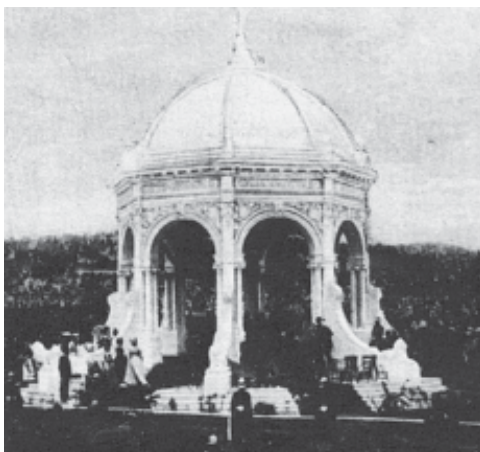
The knowledge that it was not of great durability, and therefore could not stand to tell coming generations of the noble era began within it was, perhaps, the only jarring thought in connection with it.

Octagonal in shape and dome-covered, the pavilion had eight archways. The floor is 50 ft in diameter, and the flagpole rises from the apex of the dome to a height of 70 ft. Each of the eight piers upon which the arches rest is composed of a Corinthian pilaster nursed by four columns built and fluted in the Ionic style. It is from these columns that the arches spring, and surmounting the arcade is a massive and handsome medallion (sic) cornice.

A heavy frieze follows the contours of the building, giving eight sides, which are used to carry the symbol of union a stage further. Thrown out in relief on each of six of the sides is the name of one of the United States of the Commonwealth; on the seventh (the southern) is worked "Australia", and on the opposite octagonal side (the northern) appears the date of union "A.D. 1901".

On the faces of the keystones of the northern and southern arches are cast models of the Queen's head, and above them are beautifully wrought representations of the Imperial coat of arms.

The octagonal dome has heavy moulding on all its angles, and in each instance the moulding terminates in an ornamental truss. The outer surface of the dome looked like a clever manipulation of loose tiles, but in reality the fibrous plaster was treated to resemble tiling. The top of the dome, as already stated, gradually merges, by astute



Bulletin Board

February Wed 14: Greg Blaxel, "The Life of Gregory Blaxland" and "Brush Farm";

March Wed 14: Gareth Debney, "Yaralla's Wild Side". Gareth will be focusing mainly on the conservation value and significance of the remnant natural bushland on Yaralla and Rivendell.

architectural devices, into the flag-pole.

The floor of the pavilion is level at a height of 6 ft from the ground, and it is approached on each of its eight sides by two flights of steps. Some admirable modellings intersect this approach at its angles, which are also the angles where the plasters and columns rise. Abutting from each pilaster, and depending to bases settled in the ground, is a magnificent truss having for its ultimate adornment fine casts of powerful lions.

Profuse on the entablature both within and without the pavilion are deft modellings in representation of the handicrafts, and more particularly the native industries of the continent. Cattle, sheep, wheat in the ear and in bulk, corn in the cob, ploughshares, symbols of mining and much else equally significant are patent to the observer.

The interior of the dome is panelled and otherwise chastely ornamented. Sunk in the ground sufficiently to allow its surface to project a few inches above the flooring boards, in a position which is the exact centre of the octagon, is a huge block of granite hewn at Moruya. Over this block the table stood at which Lord Hopetoun signed the papers calling this nation into actual life. The stone is to be preserved for all time.

The designs for the pavilion are wholly those of the Government Architect.



Rotunda as it is in Cabarita Park

Museum Rosters

Can you help with our Museum. It's an important part of our Society's work and doesn't need any hard physical effort. This is something any of our members can undertake.

Can you help? If so, let us know!

Telephone Lorraine on 9743-2682 or Lois on 9744-8528.

Hangings a Grim Spectacle at The Notorious Rocks

In the early days of Sydney Town few respectable citizens dared go near The Rocks for fear of thugs and felons.

Anyone taking a visitor on a tour of Sydney Town would look disdainfully in the direction of The Rocks area and say it was a centre of low life where only the scum lived, worked and thrived.

Only when a hanging or a mass hanging was to be held did ordinary citizens visit the notorious Rocks with gay abandon to see the condemned plunge into eternity from the trees on Gallows Hill, which started where Essex Street now meets George Street.

At the foot of the hill was the Sydney jail with a gallows towering above its stone walls.

Even when the jail was later transferred to the heights of Darlinghurst in 1841, the gallows remained in use and dispatched murderers and even petty criminals.

A newspaper said: "Whenever an execution took place the people would assemble on the hill and wait there until they saw the body fall."

On one occasion four men were hanged for robbing a house, although they stoutly protested their innocence to the end.

On the same day a fifth man was hanged for attempting to murder a fellow convict; he gave as his reason he wanted freedom through death from his terrible existence in the Sydney jail.

On such occasions, George and Exeter Streets were packed to capacity with men, women and children eager for the sight of an execution, and drinkers packed the yard of a neighbouring hotel.

Sir Francis Forbes, the first Chief Justice of New South Wales, was strongly against public hangings and said they had a bad effect on public morality.

Captain Steel, then in charge of the Sydney jail, agreed with Sir Francis when the latter pointed out that the new prison at Darlinghurst would be an improvement on the old one.

Steel made the bloodthirsty comment, "They could hang seven together at a pinch in Darlinghurst and they could hang six comfortably."

The old Sydney jail in Essex Street was a cesspool of humanity and the darkest chapters in the history of The Rocks were connected with it.

Essex Street was the southern bound-



Men, women and children assembled on the hill to watch the executions.

ary to the jail and Harrington Street was behind it. Felons of both sexes were imprisoned there for crimes that ranged from pranks to murder.

The stone jail was more satisfactory than Sydney's first jail, a tent, which was soon replaced by one of logs, which was destroyed by fire early in 1799.

Sydney jail was described by Commissioner Biggs in 1822 as, "Two small rooms for the confinement of female prisoners . . . two apartments measuring 32 ft by 22 ft for the men. The rooms contained wooden platforms upon which the prisoners slept. Sometime there are not less than 60 prisoners confined in these two rooms, the prisoners consisting of convicts for trial, witnesses, convicts under sentence for transportation to the Coal River, free people and frequently sailors . . . sentenced to work in the chain gang or to confinement in jail."

Another chronicler described how one small room confined 62 females with some eight to ten children.

But while that may seem horrible, the men were made to suffer most. They were so packed together "that there has not been sufficient space for all of them to lie down and take rest at the same time", one writer stated.

Many male prisoners were forced to take turns at standing while others rested.

Prisoners sentenced to solitary confinement fared better as the main jailer, for want of better accommodation, was forced to lock up three prisoners serving that sentence together.

As a result of the cramped quarters,

most of the prisoners were continually fighting and quarrelling.

The food for the convicts consisted of a pound of bread a day.

There was a blackmarket in the jail and some prisoners sold tobacco, sugar and tea to fellow inmates.

Commissioner Biggs was upset when he observed criminals, their accomplices and witnesses for their trials being herded together in a cramped cell, and he believed that they should have been separated to prevent connivance in the case to be heard and also to safeguard the men against violence and intimidation.

It was a big day for The Rocks and Sydney Town when the prisoners were transferred to Darlinghurst jail which was called Woolloomooloo Stockade at the time.

The prisoners were moved on June 7, 1841, and one account of the march stated:

“Convicts, shivering and miserable in clanking irons, guarded by armed police and warders, shambled along from the old prison to the new . . .”

There were young and old, hardened criminals and petty thieves.

“They seemed to crawl along George Street and Bridge Street, creep through the Domain, then stagger up the hill in the Woolloomooloo Stockade . . . 119 men and boys, with the murderer Curran in the van, heavily ironed. Then, later on, as a slower, sadder spectacle, came the 39 women prisoners – and Darlinghurst was populated.

The Rocks lived on with the departure of the inmates of the old jail and the residents continued to develop their criminal instincts.

All the bad characters congregated there – the thief, his fence, and the moll who lured wealthier citizens to the Cut where they were bashed and robbed.

They spent their ill-gotten gains in local inns such as the Hero of Waterloo, then called The Young Princess, believed in honour of the princess who became Queen Victoria.

One of the most dreaded parts of The Rocks in those far-off days was Argyle Cut, now a social rendezvous. In 1843, after 12 years of negotiation, the Government started to levy a toll and working parties of chain-gang convicts walked there each morning from Hyde Park Barracks to toil with picks on the rocks. But progress was slow, even with threats of “50 cuts before breakfast with the cat-o’-nine-

tails”.

When Argyle Cut was eventually opened to traffic it had an air of criminality around it and if any citizen was foolish enough to walk through, he ran the risk of being garrotted or bashed by the Push.

One man who had been kind to members of the Rocks Push was walking through the Cut one night after dark. He was about to be attacked when his face lit in the flare of the gaslamp.

The Push members gave him an escort the rest of his way and warned him not to be foolish enough to walk through the criminal area again at night, and he heeded the well-meant advice.

People still looked furtively behind them when they had to walk through the Cut at night, even well into the twentieth century.

Sometimes the Push boys would get tired of waiting for victims and would fight among themselves.

The advent of the electric trams seemed to stop their activities greatly in the area.

On at least one occasion, the police were sent on their way by the Cabbage-tree boys, a Pitt Street push.

The police were put to flight from their George Street North watchhouse by the angry mob, supported by sailors.

There was Jack the Miller, who is more identifiable as Jack the Miller’s Point, whose windmill reared to the sky and turned in the wind at the western end of Windmill Street, nor far from Cockle Bay Point.

The convicts often went there to nearby Lag’s Jetty, where they were taken by ferry to Cockatoo Island, then a penal island.

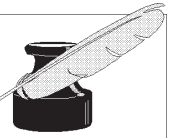
They were farewelled, sometimes never to be seen again for many years, by mothers, wives and girl friend.

One of the denizens of The Rocks was prize-fighter Albert Griffiths, but if you had asked any other person living there maybe they would not have known his full name.

That was because he was known around the boxing world as “Griffo” and was undoubtedly one of the best featherweight fighters in the world and many considered him world champion. Griffo was a member of a push and was not averse to fighting in the street or the hotels of the district.

(An article from “Stories of Australia’s History”, published in The Sun newspaper on 13th August, 1975.)

A Note of Thanks



A special thank you to members Vince and Mary Scerri, Ronald Schmid and John Clark. During December they worked long and hard on repairing the very dilapidated cattle ramp adjacent to the timber shed which was our original project. They also cleaned up around the area.

Next time you visit Yaralla make sure to make a left turn to see the work.

Congratulations and thanks to you all - a magnificent job, well done.



Looking for Volunteers!!!

The Sydney West Area Health Service has given us permission to refurbish the Dairy building to be used for preparation and serving of Devonshire Teas on our Open Days.

As the flats at the Stables complex are now being rented out we no longer have the use of these on the open days so setting up in the Dairy building will be a great opportunity.

However, there is a great deal of work to be done in making it fit for handling and serving food, so we are appealing for help.

Vince Scerri is in charge of this project and he needs people to help renovate the wall surfaces, preparing them for painting - and then to do the actual painting.

There is probably some minor carpentry work also involved.

If you can help, please contact Vince on 9736-1003 to put your name on our volunteer list and let us know how you can help.

Vince will contact you with date and time details



Christmas Twilight BBQ

On a balmy summer's evening, 31 of our members and their friends enjoyed our annual Twilight Christmas Barbecue. There was food and fellowship a'plenty - and a good time was had by all.

Special thanks to those who helped clean the very grotty barbecue and then handled the cooking and serving. A job well done - and much appreciated.

If you missed out in 2006 don't miss out in 2007 - make a note in your diary NOW! It will be on Wednesday, 12th December, 2007.

This is a chance to get to know fellow members better in a social atmosphere . . . so come and enjoy!



Visit to Yaralla

On 1st December we were privileged to have a visit by 48 children, accompanied by teachers and parents, from Mortlake Public School 2nd grade. Our guides were most impressed with the children's knowledge of the estate. This bodes well for the future of Yaralla.

Thanks also to the guides: Trish Skehan, Vince Scerri, Lorraine Holmes and Pat Corbitt.



Poem to a Glorious Flag

*Our flag bears the stars that blaze at night
In our southern sky of blue,
And that little old flag in the corner,
That's part of our heritage too.*

*It's for the English, the Scots and the Irish
Who were sent to the end of the Earth;
The rogues and the schemers and
dreamers
Who gave our Australia its birth.*

*And you who are shouting to change it,
You don't seem to understand,
It's the flag of our laws and language,
Not the flag of a faraway land.*

*There are plenty of people who'll tell you
How, when Europe was plunged into night,
The little old flag in the corner
Was their symbol of freedom and light.*

*It don't mean we owe our allegiance
To a forgotten imperial dream.
We've the stars to show where we're going
And the old flag to show where we've been.*

*It's only an old piece of bunting
It's only an old coloured rag,
But there are thousands who died for its
honour
And fell in defence of our flag.*

(written by an anonymous Australian)

From the Secretary's Desk

Walker & Yaralla newspaper cutting: We have quite a lot of these which need to be collated into somewhat of a date order and then catalogued for ready reference. This work can be done either in your own home or down at the museum. Any offers? They should make interesting reading for you as well. We're still looking for a volunteer, is it you?

These cuttings are a very important part of our archives and we need to be able to reference them as needed. Can you spare a little time!

Museum Clean up: We're planning on doing this work on each Wednesday in January, from 10:00 am till about noon. If you can help, just turn up - preferably in old clothes as the work could be a bit on the dusty side.

Museum Rosters: The new roster will be drawn up in January for the whole year. We need more helpers. Can you spare two hours on either the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays or 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month? It's not hard work and needs no qualifications.

Open Day Banners: We are currently looking for some sites where banners advertising our Open Days can be displayed. The area would need to have fairly heavy passing traffic and have an area where the banner could be fixed to a fence or something similar. Do you know of anywhere? Let us have your suggestions

Yaralla Open Day: Our next Open Day at Yaralla will be on Sunday, 29th April. Please mark it in your diary now!

Volunteer Workers at Yaralla: We are in the process of undertaking work around the estate in an endeavour to make it more presentable in keeping with its historic importance. This work will take many forms, from clearing weeds, undergrowth, etc., to some form of gardening, or general building maintenance work on the buildings we are being allowed to use. If you can help in any way, please don't hesitate in making contact.

For Your Diary

Wed. 3rd January - Clean up work at Museum

Wed. 10th January - Clean up work at Museum

Wed. 17th January - Clean up work at Museum

Wed. 24th January - Executive Meeting

Wed. 14th February - General Meeting

Wed. 28th February - Walker Estates Committee Meeting

Wed. 14th March - General Meeting

Wed. 28th March - Executive Meeting